GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

CONTENTS FOR WEEK OF MARCH 19, 1923. Vol. II. No. 3.

1. The Blue Nile: Tribute Bearer to the Pharaohs.
2. Icebergs: Crystal Derelicts of the Sea.
3. Siam: Ruled by a Shakespearean Scholar.
4. Belgian Congo: Country of Gold and Diamonds Is Also Radium Storehouse.
5. Birds That Fish for Man.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE OF THE EAST: AN EGYPTIAN FELLAH PLOWING WITH A CAMEL AND A BUFFALO

The forked stick of the days of the Pharaohs is still seen along the Nile. In the lower delta region the cotton boom stimulated the importation of some more modern implements.

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The Blue Nile: Tribute Bearer to the Pharaohs

THE Nile has long been famous because of its annual deposit of sediment on Egyptian fields. But credit should be given more specifically: it is chiefly from the Blue Nile, or the Bahr-el-Azrak as it is called locally, with its deeply dug grand canyon that the life-giving alluvium comes. The British government is said now to be considering the advisability of damming up the Blue Nile not far from Khartum in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan so that the rich triangular region between the two mighty forks of the most historic river in the world may be turned into a granary for all the Sudan.

Rich Region Almost Unknown

Down through a region little known and almost devoid of inhabitants or any form of cultivation, rushing over numerous cataracts and rapids, the Blue Nile cuts its way from its source, the beautiful broad sheet of water known as Lake Tsana. The lake, which in the future may become the reservoir for the irrigation of a vast area, lies 6,000 feet above sea-level and about 2,500 feet below the normal level of the plateau in a basin resembling somewhat the crater of a volcano. Near its southeastern corner, through a great fissure in its almost inaccessible rim, the river issues, and circling around the mountains strikes out in an 850 mile course toward the northwest to join the chief branch of the Nile at Khartum of Kitchener fame.

The vast plains of Sennar or El Gezira on its left bank are among the richest on the continent and it is these that the irrigation projects are to develop. In Sennar, the Dinder, a Blue Nile tributary which also rises in the Abyssinian highlands, adds, during the rainy season, its sediment-laden flood to that of the already swollen river, and together at Khartum they discharge over 10,000 cubic meters of water per second, thus outdoing the White Nile itself during that time.

Main Nile Dammed Already

From July to October this mighty flooding goes on, the waters of the Blue Nile, so called because of their clarity and blueness at ordinary seasons, mingling their chocolate brown with the greenish-grey color of the White branch of Father Nilus.

This great difference in the volume of water from Abyssinia is due to the heavy rain that falls in the mountains of the country not far from its eastern coast. The Nile system in itself may be said to be a simple one, its basic source being that steadily flowing river from the tropics which is fed by the great lakes in the eastern and central portion of the continent, augmented at times by a great volume of water from its Abyssinian affluents.

Since 1902 the inhabitants of Egypt near the mouth of the Nile have had their water supply replenished during the season of low water by the reserve supply stored in the Aswan Dam.

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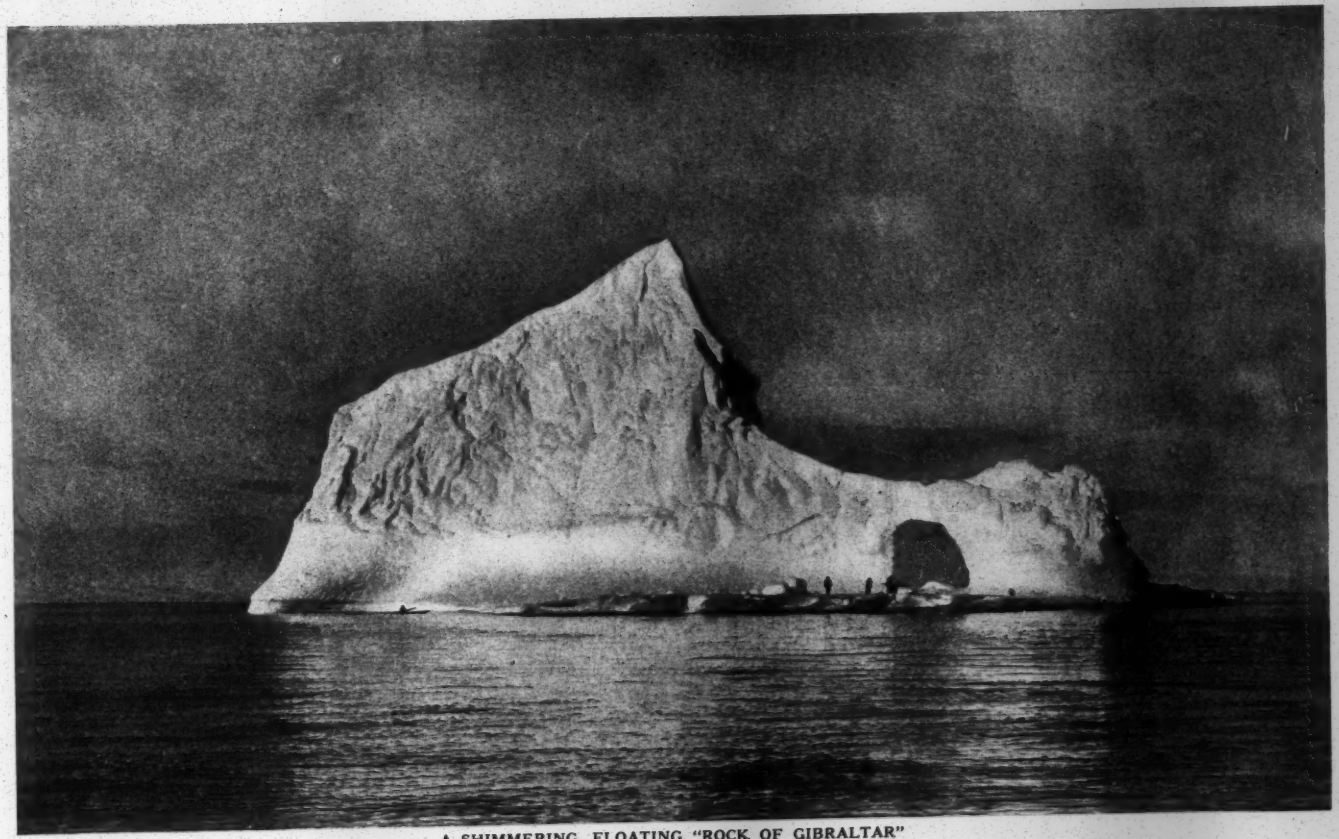

A SHIMMERING, FLOATING "ROCK OF GIBRALTAR"

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Icebergs: Crystal Derelicts of the Sea

IT WILL soon be the open season for icebergs in the North Atlantic—the floating white castles of the North with their fantastic glamor and threat of death. They sometimes wander down to latitude 38 degrees—as far south as such sunny climes as Lisbon in Portugal or the shores of Delaware Bay.

The icebergs which are to be seen during the early spring months in the Atlantic are great frozen fresh water glacier-ends which have broken loose from the ice fields of Greenland and floated with the current into warmer seas. They "herd" quite often off the coast of Newfoundland. The warm waters of the northwestern coast of Europe keep them back on that side as far north as 70 degrees. There are few of them also in the North Pacific except near northeastern Asia.

Monster Floating Palaces

Gorgeously tricked out in white that gleams and sparkles in the sunlight, these monster palaces push out from the great sheet of ice that covers Greenland. No architectural feat of the ancient Egyptians or of the Byzantines, or of a Sir Christopher Wren can compare with the Karnaks and hundreds of other temples which are carved in their sides by the agents of erosion. No marble possesses the rainbow-tints of their columns, and no man-made edifice has so fairylike, capricious, and bizarre a character. The whole gamut of blues and greens plays hide and seek over their surface, and sometimes in summer little cascades tumble over the sides to hide themselves in the waves. But their ghostlike emptiness and the chill of their breath make mariners shiver with dread.

Most of the icebergs of the North Atlantic are pushed out from the west coast of Greenland between Disco Bay and Smith Sound or from the east coast south of 68 degrees latitude. Some of them are as much as 445 feet above the surface of the water; thus showing about one-sixth or one-seventh of their volume

Debris Soon Lost

As they sail away they necessarily start with some of the debris which was originally in the bottom of the glacier. Much of this immediately falls to the bottom of the ocean, having melted its way out. Often they capsize or flop over on one side when the breaking or melting shifts their centers of gravity. The debris, when it is on the top quickly plows its way through the iceberg, having absorbed more of the heat of the sun than the ice. When it is on the side it soon slides into the ocean. At any rate the debris seldom stays with the berg far on its journey. Nothing seems to mar the purity of the icebergs' exteriors. They support little life, a minute worm and the simple microscopic algae, which gives a red color to snow, being their only inhabitants.

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Inhabitants "Hard-Boiled"

Long stretches of the area north of the Blue Nile are almost entirely uninhabited, one traveler reporting that he traversed "86 miles in Abyssinia and had not seen a dwelling or a sign of cultivation." And even when one encounters inhabitants in the country further to the east he finds them "unashamed of any crime or vice." They perpetrate their crimes with perfect indifference and recount them with gaiety and laughter as part of the regular conversation during meals.

Up in the highlands near the river's source, despite the burning tropical heat of the day, one is glad to crawl snugly beneath his blanket when night has fallen. The beautiful blue lake encircled with mountains and dotted with islands leaves much for future explorers to do, as few data concerning it have been gathered and few soundings made. The sudden gusts and squalls which rush down the valleys across it give plenty of variety to its some-time deceptive calm. Hippopotamuses, which the natives hunt for their hides, infest its waters.

The mystery which has always clung to the Dark Continent still encompasses much of this virtually unknown region, but its promise is great when man learns to harness the power it possesses, to give water to its thirsty and dry sections, and wrest from it the wealth of its natural gifts.

Bulletin No. 1, March 19, 1923.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the Geographic News Bulletin were made for the year ending **with a March, 1923, issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify The** Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

School Service Department
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Washington, D. C.

Kindly send ..... copies of the Geographic News Bulletin for the school year beginning with the issue of February 12, for class room use, to

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Siam: Ruled by a Shakespearean Scholar

THE king of Siam has translated "Romeo and Juliet" into Siamese and published it for the edification and pleasure of his people. He is an ardent Shakespeare "fan," in fact, and has made substantial contributions to the fund being raised in England for a Shakespeare Memorial Theater.

All this conjures up an altogether different picture of Siam's civilization, and one more nearly up-to-date, than the white elephants or little boys smoking big cigars, popularly associated with that Asiatic kingdom.

Quaint and curious customs do prevail in Siam, wild men still may be found on the Burmese half of the Malay peninsula, and in the northern forests of Siam roam the tiger, leopard, rhinoceros and tapir.

But in Bangkok electric lights illuminate streets traversed by trolley cars, erstwhile elephant paths have been converted into boulevards along which spin familiar makes of automobiles, and a royal establishment which clings to the sacred elephant employs a yacht for week-end trips on the Menam River.

"Bobbed Hair" and "Knickers"

In some superficial aspects it would seem that Bangkok is several laps ahead of ultra-modern America. Knickerbockers attract attention when worn by American women in city streets, and bobbed hair is frowned on in some of our conservative business and social circles. Yet the Siamese woman wears the knee length panung, as does her brother, and for generations she has refused to be bothered with long hair. She has a freedom that has developed a shrewdness and independence in contrast to most oriental women, though she is apt to be unlettered.

The spirit of progress in Siam lies much deeper than surface likenesses or acceptance of fads. No duress compelled her sovereign to convert a tract formerly used for cremating members of the royal family into a park for cricket, golf and football playing. From this park in the Royal Palace runs a boulevard with three roadways, set apart by double rows of trees, and flanked by shaded footpaths—an avenue which would do credit to the plan of an American city. Nor are Bangkok's many improvements due to foreign promotion, for there are fewer Europeans in Siam's capital than in almost any other Eastern city of its importance.

Bangkok is a city of half a million inhabitants, the capital, metropolis and port city of Siam. The kingdom has an area about equal to that of Spain and a population of some eight million.

They Pickle Their Tea

The high civilization of Bangkok has a contrast in extreme primitive conditions of other parts of the country. Curious customs abound. In Upper Siam tea is pickled for chewing instead of being used as a beverage. First the leaves are sun dried, then they are steamed to rid them of tannin. Next they are weighed down for fermentation, a process suggestive of the German prepara-

UMI

The typical Greenland icebergs probably establish the world's record for "cold storage." As they float along southward the sun often forms little lakes of water in basins on their tops. Mariners sometimes scale them to drink this cold crystal-clear water and even to replenish their ships' supplies. Someone with a mathematical turn of mind has estimated that the water quaffed so carelessly is perhaps 10,000 years old—melted from snow that fell thousands of years before the making of the remotest man-made record yet discovered.

Antarctic Icebergs Larger

The icebergs of the Antarctic regions are larger than those of the Arctic, but not so tall perhaps. They are portions of the enormous ice sheet around the South Pole, which break off in table-like blocks and float away as grim sentinels of the southern waters. One explorer reports that at one time he counted as many as sixty from the deck of his steamer, while more than that could be seen from his masthead.

Like mighty derelicts, dwarfing our largest battleships into utter insignificance, their sides sometimes measuring from thirty to forty miles in length when they first break off from the Ross Barrier, they float out into the depths, where the warmer winds and seas eat out their very cores, undermine them, make them turn turtle, and finally break them up into smaller bergs and hard small chips called "growlers." The "growlers" are almost as dangerous as the mother iceberg.

Bulletin No. 2, March 19, 1923.

NATIVES BUILDING A DWELLING IN THE CONGO

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Belgian Congo: Country of Gold and Diamonds Is Also Radium Storehouse

DISCOVERY in the Belgian Congo of large quantities of pitchblende, a radium-bearing ore—a discovery credited with the significant result of reducing the price of radium from $120,000 to $70,000 a gram—has served to emphasize the probable great importance to the world of this country at the heart of Africa when it shall have been fully developed.

In its potentialities, the Belgian Congo might be called "the Brazil of Africa." Like the largest of South American states, it is of vast extent, covers the heart of a continent, is situated in the tropics, and has flowing through it one of the world's greatest rivers, capable of carrying an empire's commerce. It is only to the Amazon, premier of rivers, that the Congo River can in truth be compared. Other great streams are longer than either, but none approaches them closely in the volumes of water which they pour into the sea. The average width of the Congo is five miles for about half its nearly 3,000 miles of length, and in places it is as much as 16 miles wide.

Area One-Third That of U. S.

Perhaps the vast bulk of Belgian Congo can best be understood if one imagines the country lifted bodily and set down on the surface of the United States. Its 909,000 square miles would cover almost exactly one-third of the area, not including Alaska. If the southwestern corner of Congo were placed at San Diego, California, the southern boundary would roughly correspond with the Mexican border, and the southeastern corner would fall at the southern point of Texas. Forming a very rough square, its northeastern corner would lie at Des Moines and its northwestern corner in Yellowstone Park.

But though this comparison gives a good idea of Congo's great size, its latitude and climate are far different from those of the states covered. If it were shifted to the Western Hemisphere in its true latitude it would lie astride the Amazon and would cover most of the Guianas and a large slice of northern and central Brazil.

Radio Replaces Savage Drum Signals

What is now the Belgian Congo has had an unusual history. Livingstone and Stanley put the country "on the map." Soon afterward, in 1882, an international committee organized a government, called it Congo Free State, and selected King Leopold of Belgium to be its ruler. Many irregularities in the administration of the region were alleged to have resulted from this personal rule, and in 1908 Leopold ceded the territory to Belgium. A year later King Albert came to the Belgian throne, reforms were pushed in the Congo and a new constructive era began.

Measured in dollars and efforts expended, much has been done to open up the Belgian Congo. Fleets of government as well as private steamers ply the

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tion of sauer kraut. The substance thus formed is placed in the mouth until the juices are removed. The appearance of the individuals with the balls in their cheeks forms a never-ending source of amusement for travelers.

The capital of Upper Siam is Chiengmai, famous for its lacquer ware and center of the teak tree trade. This region is a land of boats. Water routes form virtually the only lines of communication between the upper and lower kingdom.

In Eastern Siam a plateau and a plain support a population which must move from swamp lands in the rainy season to higher elevations which are barren and stony. Hence living conditions are most primitive.

The "Venice of the East"

Bangkok has been called the "Venice of the East." The Menam River is the great trading street of the city. Floating houses do a "cash and carry" business through windows opening toward the channel where pass the shoppers in almost every conceivable sort of craft. These range from great steamships to the priests' boats propelled by novitiates, and from the immense rice boats to the canoes which carry the postmen. Then there are the river-going cafeterias, serving the residents of floating houses. These, too, are canoes, equipped with tiny stoves.

Perhaps the most colorful river scene is the water market, where each tiny boat with its cargo of food bears a little lamp. The market hours are from midnight until early morning. And during that period the market section of the river resembles a fairyland with its myriad glimmering lights.

With her short hair and loose knickerbocker-like panung, this Siamese woman reflects the style followed by millions of her sisters. The queer headdress of her son shows that he is to become an actor.

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Birds That Fish for Man

JUST as Americans amuse notables from abroad by showing them round-ups in the "cow country," so the Japanese are able to entertain their visitors by initiating them into the picturesque mysteries of cormorant fishing in their back country.

Fishing with trained cormorants seems to be as ancient as Japanese history, for an old poem in regard to the first emperor mentions the sport. Today the method is employed in relatively few places in the islands, and is at its best in the Nagara River, near the city of Gifu, about 150 miles west of Tokyo. The fishing is done only at night, the darker the better. Moonlight seasons are off periods, and it is useless to take the cormorants out except before the moon rises or after it sets. This is because artificial light, furnished by blazing pine faggots in metal baskets hung from the bows of the long narrow fishing boats, is an important factor in the procedure. The fish are attracted by the glare, and when they rise near the boats the cormorants reap a rich and quick harvest.

Look Awkward—Dive Like a Flash

The birds that play the stellar role in this queer sport-industry are like large, black, awkward-looking ducks. But their apparent awkwardness is highly deceptive; and they possess a marked degree of intelligence. Placed in the water, they dive like a flash; and dart as he may, the nearby fish once sighted is almost sure to wind up in a twinkling in the unerring gullet that pursues him.

But catching is not keeping for the cormorants. Each bird has a cord attached from near the base of his wings, the other end held, in common with the leashes of perhaps eleven other birds, by a deft-fingered Japanese in the boat. About the lower portion of the throat of each feathered fisherman is an adjustable metal collar. This is loose enough to permit the passage of very small fish, but not those of a marketable size. Above the collar the larger fish pile up, expanding the elastic gullet, until four to eight have accumulated. Then the bird is towed to the boat, placed over a basket, and the fish gently pressed from his throat and mouth. A few less considerate masters unceremoniously turn the birds upside down and shake out the catch. In an expedition lasting three or four hours one bird may catch as many as 450 fish.

Keen as Pointer Dogs

The birds are as keen for their work as pointer dogs. They dart about with the greatest enthusiasm, croaking as they dive or when they come momentarily to the surface to swallow their prey. Their active life is about 12 years. The senior of the flock is known as "Number 1" and has the position of honor near the bow as the boat prepares for action. The other birds are ranged in order of seniority alternately on the sides of the boat. The birds know the order in which they are to be placed in the water and taken out, and if the proper order is departed from they make noisy protest.

After the night's work is over the feathered fishermen come into their

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several navigable stretches of the Congo and the lakes. Railroads have been built around the various regions of rapids and falls, and are being pushed into the interior, and laid to connect with British and Portuguese lines at the borders. Scores of radio stations have been set up and now fling their messages where in the past savage drum signals alone were heard. The Belgians even have a trans-Congo aeroplane mail service which rushes European mail across the country twice a month on the arrival of steamers at the Atlantic port of Boma, at the mouth of the Congo.

Contains Gorilla-Haunted Eden

But with all this activity, the surface of the Belgian Congo's possibilities has barely been scratched. Enormous tropical jungles like those of the Amazon valley await proper forestry. In the southeast are extensive rolling prairies teeming with game, that, with the solution of the tsetse-fly problem, would make excellent cattle ranges. And chance discoveries have shown that the mineral stores of the country are seemingly unlimited. Copper, tin, gold, and diamonds to the value of many millions of dollars have been extracted. Some coal and iron is mined and it is believed that much more exists. Now, when science is finding epoch-making uses for radioactive substances, the opening up of what is believed to be the world's richest radium ores caps Congo's mineral climax.

Congo is not entirely a torrid land. In the extreme east around Lake Kivu—itself 6,000 feet above the sea—rise mountains as high as Pike's Peak. In this upland region the weather is delightful and the slopes and valleys are described by travelers as among the world's beauty spots. Nearby the night sky is lighted by the boiling cauldron of Africa's Kilauea. This Eden is the home of large numbers of gorillas. The Belgian Government is considering the setting aside of a large area in this region as a gorilla refuge where the creatures can be preserved from the extinction which threatens them, and where scientists may study them in their native haunts. Naturalists have found that unless cornered these gorillas are far from ferocious, and it is predicted that if protected they will become entirely tamed.

Bulletin No. 4, March 19, 1923.

Note to Teachers

References to articles and pictures in The National Geographic Magazine concerning subjects treated in this Bulletin are given because many teachers wish to employ them for further study or for project and problem assignments. The following is only a partial bibliography extracted from "The Cumulative Index of The National Geographic Magazine" (1899-1922, inclusive). A limited supply of some numbers may be ordered from the Society's offices at the prices named. Those numbers marked with an asterisk (*) are out of print. Bound volumes of The Geographic may be consulted in any public library and in school libraries.

Egypt: Along the Nile, Through Egypt and the Sudan. By Frederick Simpich. Vol. XLII, pp. 379-410, 29 ills., Oct., 1922. (*)

American Discoveries in Egypt. Vol. XVIII, pp. 801-806, 8 ills., Dec., 1907. (*)

Resurrection of Ancient Egypt, The. By James Baikie. Vol. XXIV, pp. 957-1020, 46 ills., 1 page map, Sept., 1913. (*)

Reconstructing Egypt's History. By Wallace N. Stearns. Vol. XXIV, pp. 1021-1042, 21 ills., Sept., 1913. (*)

Icebergs: Sailing the Seven Seas in the Interest of Science: Adventures Through 157,000 Miles of Storm and Calm, from Arctic to Antarctic and Around the World, in the Non-Magnetic Yacht "Carnegie." By J. P. Ault. Vol. XLII, pp. 631-690, 47 ills., 1 chart, Dec., 1922. 50c.

Ice-Wrapped Continent, An (Antarctic Continent). By Gilbert H. Grosvenor. Vol. XVIII, pp. 95-117, 20 ills., 1 half-page map, Feb., 1907. (*)

Siam: Hunting the Chaulmoogra Tree. By J. P. Rock. Vol. XLI, pp. 243-276, 39 ills., 1 page map, March, 1922. (*)

Coronation of His Majesty King Maha-Vajiravudh of Siam, The. By Colonel Lea Febiger. Vol. XXIII, pp. 389-416, 25 ills., April, 1912. (*)

Belgian Congo: Transporting a Navy Through the Jungles of Africa in War Time. By Frank J. Magee, R. N. V. R. Vol. XLII, pp. 331-362, 31 ills., Oct., 1922. (*)

Cormorant Fishing: Fisheries of Japan, The. By Hugh M. Smith. Vol. XVI, pp. 201-220, 13 ills., May, 1905. (*)

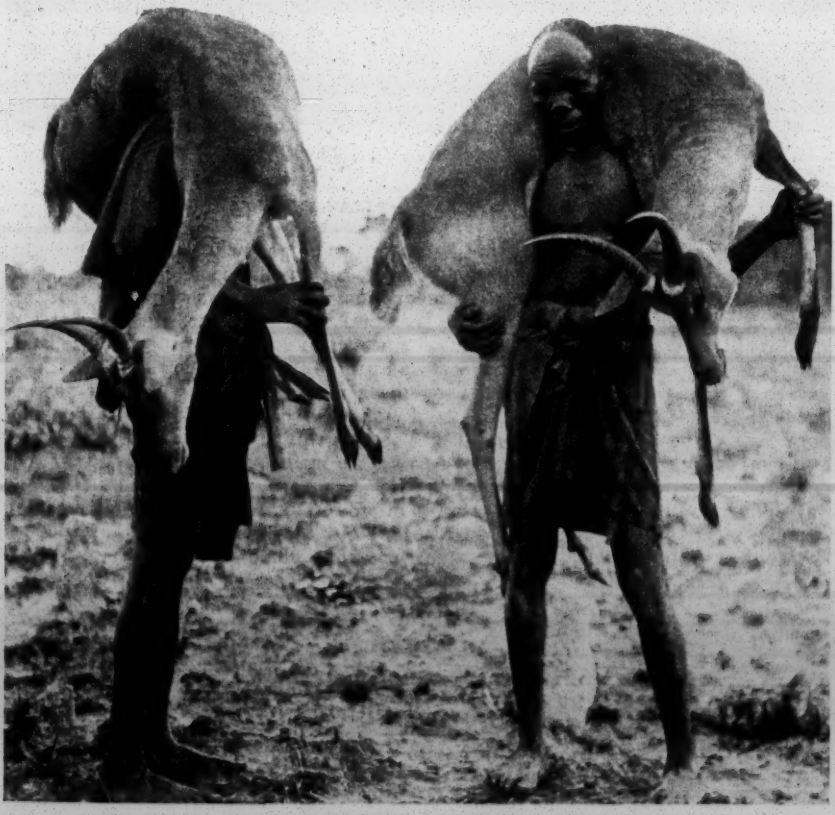
reward. The fish are sorted and all small ones are fed to the cormorants, whose collars have been removed. They catch their food on the fly as it is tossed to them, for all the world like a pack of hungry hounds about a farm-house door. In the feeding as in all the other routine of handling the birds, the senior member of the flock must be fed first and the others in order, or their resentment is shown at once.

Sport Once Known in West

The fish caught by means of the trained cormorants are a sort of dwarf salmon, called ayu, comparable in size to smelts. They run up the rivers in spring like salmon to spawn. When these little fish are fried to golden crispness their flavor and delicacy is unsurpassed. They are in such high favor that a considerable area of the fishing ground on the Nagara River is reserved for imperial use, and special cormorants and their masters are employed to keep the tables of the emperor supplied during the season.

Fishing with cormorants is also practiced in some parts of China, but there the fishing is almost entirely commercial with little of the sport aspect. The sport was known in the west early in the seventeenth century, and James I of England had among his officials a "Master of Cormorants" just as he had a falconer.

Bulletin No. 5, March 19, 1923.



NATIVES OF THE BELGIAN CONGO BRINGING IN BUCKS FOR DINNER

It is a simple matter to step out into the teeming jungles or prairies of Africa and obtain an unlimited supply of game for food.